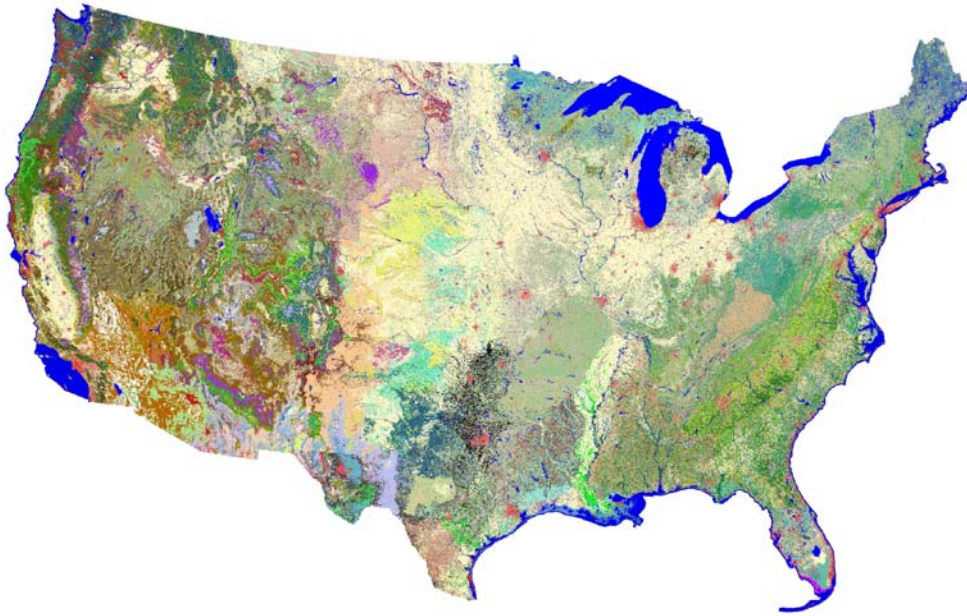


New U.S. Map Could Stop Species From Becoming Endangered



A new national map of the ecosystems of America could help keep healthy species from ending up endangered.

Through ground and satellite surveys of land cover, the U. S. Geological Survey's Gap Analysis Program has generated data that conservationists may be able to use to create and sustain habitat for wildlife.

"These data are critical for determining the status of biodiversity, as baseline data for assessing climate change impacts, and for predicting the availability of habitat for wildlife," said John Mosesso, the USGS manager of GAP in a press release. "Large datasets of this type are extremely important to land and wildlife managers because they allow for analysis and planning across extensive geographic areas."

While the research and mapping related to endangered species is extensive, the rest of the animals and plants out there — known as common species — get far less attention. The Endangered Species Act, signed into law by Richard Nixon in 1973, grants extraordinary protections to plants and animals on the verge of extinction, but it does little for other creatures in an ecosystem.

The Gap Analysis Program is charged with figuring out which common species' habitats may not be well represented by existing parks and conservation areas. The only way to do that is to mash up a bunch of data about species and land use.

In addition to the large map above, there is a [searchable, zoomable mapping system](#) available. You can [download the data](#) that underpins the visualizations, too.

Paddling group hopes proposal makes more waves

Rapid City Journal

If the Black Hills Paddlers/Paddleheads get their way, a significant portion of Rapid Creek could become a destination spot for kayakers in the Black Hills.

An enhancement project over a 1.2-mile portion of Rapid Creek could be given \$400,000 in funding from Rapid City's Vision 2012 campaign. The group presented its case to a citizens committee last week and will receive an answer on June 30.

The stretch of creek from Sioux Park to the Executive Golf Course clubhouse could bring several hundred paddlers to the area, group members said.

With that possibility, though, comes the responsibility of emphasizing boating safety, and several club members understand the necessity of education.

“(Kayaking) is kind of like skiing or climbing or mountain biking. It’s inherently dangerous,” group member Oatin Johnston said. “You pretty much have to be your own safety guide. Don’t jump in there totally green without an understanding of what’s going on.”

Fellow paddler Justin Herreman said there are five key pieces of safety equipment every interested kayaker needs. After a personalized flotation device (PFD) comes a helmet, a boating skirt, and a paddle.

“It’s a good exercise in knowing your limitations,” Johnston said.

The boat itself is implied, of course. Not to be forgotten, though, is Herreman’s fifth key – some simple common sense.

“We all know we look dorky when we go paddling, but that’s just part of boating,” said Herreman, who has had an interest in kayaking since 2000. “You’ve just got to gear up correctly and use your brain.”

Rethinking safety also became an issue for the group with the vast increase in rain this spring, which leads to a much faster flow for Rapid Creek. The water has been moving at three or four times its normal speed, said Barb Schrader, owner of Global Market.

The increased flow leads to some fun “play waves,” Herreman said, but another advantage for a public enhancement of the creek would be to create safe entry and exit points no matter the creek’s water levels.

In addition to more waves, a professionally designed revamp would also create eddies, or pools of slow-moving water, at the bottom of the waves in order to create easier access in and out of the creek. The design would even have casual innertubers in mind, Herreman said.

He said local paddlers have witnessed firsthand the difference a concerted effort to enhance kayaking can have on an area. Herreman mentioned several communities in Colorado in addition to Casper, Wyo., that have brought boaters to their towns.

“Those places are kind of what inspired us to try and do this because it brings people,” Herreman said. “It’s going to concentrate the boaters into that area.”

Even in town, an interest in kayaking has ramped up slightly. Schrader said she has sold around 75 boats so far this year, and Herreman said the number of boaters he knows in the region is reaching into the hundreds.

Schrader said the potential enhancement project is just one more of a long list of projects that can pique an array of residents’ interests.

“I’m an avid volleyball player, too,” Schrader said. “There have been expansions of the courts there. We all have other things that we like to do. It’s a whole new recreational and outdoor area for all of us.”

Herreman said the group will also add \$28,300 of private funding if the Vision 2012 proposal is accepted. He said he thought the proposal was received positively by the citizens committee, and he is hopeful for the project’s future.

“It’s a beautiful, beautiful piece of green space saved from development,” Herreman said. “So we might as well enhance it in a positive direction.”

Snow, rain runoff boosts three Missouri River reservoirs

The Army Corps of Engineers said the three largest Missouri River reservoirs gained water in May because snow in the mountains and rain in the upper basin pushed runoff to 127 percent of normal.

The amount of water in the six reservoirs was 60.8 million acre-feet, the largest amount since 1999. Runoff this year is expected to be 115 percent of normal.

Oahe Reservoir gained 1.1 foot of water in May, Garrison gained 1.9 feet and Fort Peck gained 2.5 feet.

The corps said Oahe and Garrison are at their normal operating levels, while Fort Peck is below normal.

Hitting it big on protected slots for walleye

Minneapolis Star Tribune, Dennis Smith

ON RAINY LAKE - Dave Peterson cruised atop this large Minnesota-Ontario border lake one evening last week, doing what he loves most: looking for walleyes.

A native of Graceville, Minn., in the west-central part of the state near the South Dakota border, Peterson has long been smitten by a fishing addiction.

"As a kid I fished Traverse, Big Stone and Toqua, which is a lake right in Graceville," he said. "When I moved to Bemidji to go to college, it was Bemidji, Plantagenet -- most of the lakes in that area."

A resident of International Falls since 1981, Peterson has found his true fishing home here on Rainy Lake.

Most evenings in spring, summer and fall, he's on it, fishing. And when he's not fishing, he's thinking about fishing -- just like the few hundred other members of the Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club, a group founded in the early 1980s that has played a critical role in the rebirth of Rainy Lake, making it one of the state's most popular fishing destinations.

"Fishing is much better now on Rainy than when I first came here," he said. "The catch-and-release program has really taken off."

An advocate of "not fishing dead water," Peterson the other evening used his depth finder to check out a handful of mid-lake reefs on the Minnesota side of Rainy Lake.

He was trying to determine whether Rainy Lake's walleyes had begun moving toward their mid-summer habitats. If they hadn't, they soon would, he knew, due to the early arrival of spring across Minnesota, and the relatively high temperatures the state experienced in April and May, and to a lesser degree, in June.

Finding no fish on the reefs, he soon dropped his anchor near a small island.

Nearly as quickly, a walleye measuring about 21 inches was in the boat.

"Nice fish," he said.

Then, without hesitation, he freed the finned trophy to swim again in Rainy Lake.

"Let's find some more," he said.

As common as protected slots are now on Minnesota's major walleye lakes -- think Mille Lacs, Leech, Winnie and Upper Red, for example -- it can be easily forgotten that the first such slot was placed here, on Rainy Lake, in 1994.

Initially, the idea had naysayers, and some anglers protested. Vehemently.

"There was resistance," said Kevin Peterson (no relation to Dave Peterson), Department of Natural Resources area fisheries manager stationed in International Falls. "I had grown men come into my office and say that the first time they had to throw back a 19- or 20-inch walleye, they shed real tears."

What a difference 16 years can make.

Today, the protected walleye slot of 17-28 inches on Rainy is taken for granted by most -- if not all -- northern Minnesota anglers, and is credited in part for the lake's resurgence.

The Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club deserves credit for "selling" the slot idea to a suspicious angling public, and for encouraging compliance with it in the years since, Kevin Peterson said.

"Do you remember the TV commercial for [the investment company] E.F. Hutton?" Kevin Peterson said. "It went, 'When E.F. Hutton speaks, people listen.' That's how it was, and is, with the Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club. When they speak, people listen."

Said Dave Peterson:

"Actually, before the slot was put on the lake, our club offered one of our hats to anyone who released a walleye 25 inches or longer. All they had to do was fill out a form at the bait shop and they'd get a hat from us."

Soon enough, the Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club was giving away thousands and thousands of hats each year, spending as much as \$15,000 annually to encourage anglers to be particular about which of Rainy Lake's walleyes they kept, and which they released.

Funds for the hats were raised through sponsorship of an annual ice fishing contest on Rainy Lake, and by selling pull tabs.

The owner of the Hardee's in International Falls, Dave Peterson is frequently stopped by out-of-town customers visiting his restaurant who want not only a good burger (check out the one third-pound Grilled Cheese Bacon Thickburger!), but, as importantly, Rainy Lake fishing information.

That's because for nearly a decade he has moderated the Rainy Lake portion of the web site, www.fishingmn.com. Known there by his handle, Fishmeister, Peterson has filed more than 2,000 blogs in the past nine years, most of which serve as valuable how-to guides for Rainy Lake anglers.

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The DNR surveys Rainy Lake intensively each year, and has a good idea at all times of the status of its walleyes and other game fish.

Currently, the 2001 and 2006 walleye year classes are abundant, the former usually measuring about 21 inches, the latter, at 10 to 11 inches, a little smaller than it perhaps should be.

"We've had three colder-than-normal summers, and we think that's slowed the rate of growth of these fish somewhat," Kevin Peterson said.

Still, few who fish Rainy Lake propose to increase his or her take-home catches by turning back the clock to the time before the protected slot was placed on the lake.

Especially not Dave Peterson.

"There's another one," he said, hoisting a keeper walleye into the boat and placing it into his livewell.

"And fishing here will only get better," he said. "This lake is unusual in that the best fishing is usually in midsummer, when the walleyes have moved onto the reefs.

"I fish it even more often then."

Florida Man jumps in pond to avoid wildlife officer

BAKER COUNTY -- A fisherman who didn't have a freshwater license dropped his fishing pole and jumped into a pond when he saw a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officer approaching, according to the FWC's weekly report.

The officer "commanded" the man to come out of the water and he did.

The man didn't have a valid fishing license and told the officer he jumped into the pond to avoid being cited for the violation.

"The subject's effort was futile," noted the weekly report. The man was cited.

Fish and Wildlife starts Web journals

WASHINGTON, June 14 (UPI) -- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced Monday the release of the inaugural issue of its public domain Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management.

The federal agency also announced the planned re-release of its North American Fauna journal.

Officials said both online journals focus on the practical application and integration of science to the conservation and management of North American fish, wildlife, plants and the ecosystems upon which they depend. The new publications are to offer "new outlets for important, peer-reviewed research that will help advance the service's capacity for science-driven wildlife management," officials said.

"From the creation of the world's most comprehensive waterfowl surveys to the pioneering work on the effects of DDT on migratory birds conducted by Rachel Carson, the Fish and Wildlife Service has built a reputation for science excellence that spans decades," Acting Service Director Dan Ashe said. "These publications build upon that tradition, and will generate critical information that wildlife managers need to do their jobs."

The Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management, edited by John Wenburg, director of the Alaska Conservation Genetics Laboratory, is available at <http://www.fwspubs.org/loi/fwma>.

North American Fauna, which began in 1889 and continued through issue #76 in 1991, will publish monographs on an array of topics relating to North American vertebrates, invertebrates and plants. Officials said submitted manuscripts must be detailed enough to be considered among the authoritative publications on the topic or species covered.

Hawley, Widvey move forward

As others did all across South Dakota Brookings o u n y v o t e r s headed to the polls on Tuesday to decide who will be on the Nov. 2 g e n e r a l e l e c t i o n ballot.

T w o B r o o k i n g s men won the District 7 Democratic nomination for state House of Representatives, and a former state lawmaker will be the Republican candidate in the District 4 Senate race.

And while he came in second on the statewide level, former Brookings Mayor Scott Munsterman earned the most support in Brookings County among Republican candidates for governor. District 7 House of Representatives

Brookings County Democratic voters decided Tuesday that insurance agent Spencer Hawley and retired South Dakota State University professor Harold Widvey will move on to the November District 7 election for state House of Representatives.

Hawley was the top vote getter, with 465 (51 percent), and Widvey came in second with 293 votes (32 percent). Brookings entrepreneur Clayton Walker lost out with a third-place finish of 151 votes (17 percent).

Hawley and Widvey will face off against Republicans Michael Bartley, Brookings city councilor and business owner, and incumbent Carol Pitts, a consultant dietician, in the Nov. 2 election. Pitts and Bartley are both Brookings residents. Facing off for the District 7 Senate seat in November will be Democratic incumbent Sen. Pam Merchant, a graphic/Web designer , and the current Republican state representative, Rep. Larry Tidemann, retired SDSU Cooperative Extension director and associate dean of Agriculture and Biological Sciences. Both candidates live in Brookings.